

# German home-schooling family loses U.S. asylum bid

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CINCINNATI (RNS)—A German family seeking asylum in the United States so they can home-school their children lost their appeal in federal court, but their lawyers say they're prepared to petition the U.S. Supreme Court to take the case.

✘ “In Germany there is basically religious freedom, but it ends at least with teaching the children,” Uwe Romeike (pictured here teaching his son) says in a video produced by the Home School Legal Defense Association. (RNS Image: Home School Legal Defense Association)The German government persecuted the Romeike family for their faith, said Mike Donnelly, a lawyer with the [Home School Legal Defense Association](#), a religious organization representing the family.

“It is treating people who home-school for religious or philosophical reasons differently,” he added.

The Cincinnati-based 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals disagrees. The United States grants safe haven to people who have a well-founded fear of persecution, but not necessarily to those under governments with laws that simply differ from those in the United States, Judge Jeffrey Sutton wrote in the court's decision.

“The German authorities have not singled out the Romeikes in particular or home-schoolers in general for persecution,” he wrote for the three-judge panel in the case, *Uwe Romeike v. Eric Holder, Jr.*

Uwe Romeike said in an email his family began home schooling to protect their children from bullying and teachings they didn't agree with.

“As we were confronted with opposition to our choice, we began to feel more and more that our faith required us to home-school our children,” he said.

Uwe and Hannelore Romeike moved their five children to Tennessee (a sixth child has since been born) in 2008 to escape thousands of dollars in fines and increasing pressure from local police and education officials to enroll their children in school. All German parents are required by law to send their children to a state-recognized school, whether public or private.

The Romeikes are evangelical Christians. They say they should be allowed to keep their children home to teach them Christian values. Before they left Germany, the police forcibly escorted the older Romeike children to school one day. Other German families have lost custody of their children because they persist in home-schooling.

An immigration judge in Tennessee granted the Romeikes’ bid in 2010, but the Board of Immigration Appeals tossed that ruling in 2012, arguing religious home-schoolers don’t face any special consequences not applied to other families whose children don’t attend school.

The 2012 decision sparked an outpouring of support for the Romeike family among conservative U.S. Christians. More than 120,000 people signed an online petition urging President Obama to let the family stay. Conservative talk show host Glenn Beck described the case as evidence of crumbling religious freedom.

The Romeikes’ legal team plans to request a hearing before the 6th Circuit’s entire 15-judge panel. Approval for such a hearing is unlikely, Donnelly said, adding the Romeikes already are preparing to fight in the U.S. Supreme Court for asylum.